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SRI S. K. SAMBANDHAN : Is it not a fact that a larger number of varieties will be available during the Handloom Week and not during Pongal season and could not the Week be celebrated before Pongal?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : I do not agree with the hon. Member that greater number of varieties are available during the Handloom Week. On the other hand, varieties are available during seasons when the handlooms sell well in the State.

SRI MOHAMED RAZA KHAN : The Handloom Week Celebrations or the Mela conducted by the Co-operative Society with dancing and singing and all other features—is that the Handloom Week Celebration?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : It is exactly the same. I am glad to find that the hon. Member has been attracted to that place by the dancing and the singing.

SRI MOHAMED RAZA KHAN : I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the amount spent on the celebration of the Handloom Week really served the purpose, apart from the large crowd which it attracted more by the singing and the dancing and very little by the speeches of which I am sure, and whether the celebrations and the Mela served the purpose of pushing up the sales of handloom cloth.

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : I am happy to inform the hon. Member that on a sum of Rs. 12,000 spent in the whole of the State for these celebrations, sales have been effected to the tune of a crore and twenty lakhs of rupees.

Distribution of Prasadams

* 85 Q.—DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN : Will the Hon. the Minister for Home be pleased to state—

(a) whether any representation has been received by the Government from a Deputy Minister of the Government of India as to the manner in which "Prasadams" were given in the Hindu Temples at Tiruchendur and Kanyakumari; and

(b) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken thereon?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : (a) The Minister for Home received a note from the Union Deputy Minister for Railways.

(b) The Home Minister has written to the Deputy Minister explaining the position.

DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN : Is the Hon. Minister aware that in the Tiruchendur and Kanyakumari temples invidious distinctions between castes and castes among the devotees are made by the priests?

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THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: No invidious distinctions are made or observed or shown at all in any of these temples.

DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN: May I know whether in a secular State like ours which is not a theocratic State we can promote or encourage this sort of supercilious attitude on the part of the priests as has been done by the Hon. Minister by the Press statement he has issued?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: I have not been able to understand what exactly the hon. Member means. There is no question of any supercilious attitude on the part of the priests and there is no question of taking any action relating to that.

DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN: May I know whether it is not supercilious attitude on the part of the priests when they throw the 'prasadams' on the heads, on the feet and on the floor before the devotees?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: I do not know wherefrom the hon. Member has got the information. I do not know whether he has ever visited the temples. Nothing like that is done.

DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN: I have myself visited these temples. Would it not have been prudent on the part of the temple authorities so to arrange the showing round the temple in regard to the Deputy Minister for Railways as to prevent such nasty scenes taking place?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: I am afraid the Hon. the Deputy Minister for Railways does not need any pleading from the hon. Member on his behalf. The Hon. the Deputy Minister for Railways was taken round the temples and was given all honours due.

DR. A. LAKSHMANASWAMI MUDALIAR: May I know whether the letter of the Deputy Minister for Railways was a confidential one to the Hon. the Home Minister, or was it a public document?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: I cannot say whether it was a confidential or a public document. But the Hon. the Deputy Minister for Railways in a subsequent letter asked me whether I would release it to the Press or if I would agree to his releasing it to the Press. I said I had no objection to it.

DR. A. LAKSHMANASWAMI MUDALIAR: May I know under which circumstances the Hon. the Home Minister thought that it was proper conduct in a matter relating to the Minister of the State and the Minister of the Centre to rush to the Press and give his contdadiction without any attempt being made to contact the Deputy Minister?

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THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: Sir, it was not that I rushed to the Press. It was he that rushed to the Press and various versions were there and comments were there. With reference to these comments, the Press representatives asked me about my reactions and I gave my reactions. There was no question of my issuing the statement, much less the question of my rushing to the Press.

DR. A. LAKSHMANASWAMI MUDALIAR: I am not at all concerned with the particular incident about which I feel there is much to be said which is unfortunate. But my point is this. Am I to understand that the Minister of this State could on the very next day give an interview to the Press even without finding out what the facts were from the Hon. the Deputy Minister for Railways directly when he was particularly in the City on that day? The Hon. the Home Minister could have contacted the Deputy Minister for Railways and also expressed his views and what he would like to say about it.

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: It was not the next day that I met the representatives of the Press. It was only some days after the incident occurred. It was some days after I saw the statement of the Hon. the Deputy Minister for Railways which he had issued to the Press and a few days after that I saw the report of the proceedings of the Lawyers' Conference at Nagercoil. Meanwhile, there were comments also in the newspapers and just then the Press representatives met me and enquired about it. I had in the meanwhile also in my hands the letter of the Deputy Minister for Railways and then only I gave my own reactions. And I did not say anything wrong or improper about it.

3-20 p.m. DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN: May I know whether we can promote this new untouchability when we have made "untouchability" an offence punishable by law under Article 17 of the Constitution?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: The hon. Member is no doubt a scholar but he is under an obsession. In this matter there is no question of untouchability or any such thing.

DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN: The very report which was released to the Press showed that the priest, if he touched any disciple, would be polluted. That was found in the statement issued by the Hon. Minister and I have followed it very closely.

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: It does not relate to the touching of a person belonging to a particular caste. The priests who conduct worship in certain temples have got to observe certain rules and procedure and they observe those rules and procedures. Therefore, in this matter there is no question of untouchability.

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DR. A. CHIDAMBARANATHAN : According to section 106 of the newly passed Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, no discrimination is to be shown in regard to the distribution of prasadams. Will the Government be pleased to issue a statement on these lines and give instructions to the priests and the persons concerned in the temple administration in the Madras State so that it will be seen hereafter that no such discrimination is shown in regard to the distribution of prasadams?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : I may once again tell the hon. Member that there has been no case of discrimination in the distribution of prasadams and, therefore, there is no need to issue any instructions under any of the provisions of that Act.

SRI V. V. RAMASWAMI : சம்பந்தப்பட்ட கோயில்களிலே போகிற பக்தர்களுக்குப் பிரசாதம் அளிக்கும்போது, கையிலே கொடுப்பது வழக்கமா? அல்லது தூக்கி எறிவது வழக்கமா? அது எப்படிப் பரம்பரையாக நடந்துவருகிறது என்று அமைச்சர் அவர்கள் சொல்ல முடியுமா?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : கையிலே கொடுப்பதுதான் வழக்கம். தூக்கியெறிவது இல்லை. ஏதோ பத்திரிகைகள் " தூக்கி எறியப்பட்டது, தூக்கி எறியப்பட்டது " என்று எழுதியிருக்கலாம். கையிலே கொடுப்பதை நாம் எப்படி வேண்டுமானாலும் எடுத்துக்கொள்ளலாம்.

DR. A. SREENIVASAN : Is it a fact that the Hon. Deputy Minister at the Centre is allergic to priests?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : The hon. Member himself is a doctor and he can examine the Deputy Minister when he comes over here and give his finding.

Suspension of Police Personnel

* 86 *Q.*—VIDWAN T. MUTHUKANNAPPAN : Will the Hon. the Minister for Home be pleased to state—

(*a*) the number of Police constables and Police officers in the City of Madras placed under suspension during the years 1957-58, 1958-59 and up to August in 1959-60 ; and

(*b*) the charges for which they were placed under suspension?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : A statement[a] showing the number of police officers and men placed under suspension in the City of Madras and the charges for which they were placed under suspension during the period from 1st April 1957 to 31st March 1958, 1st April 1958 to 31st March 1959 and 1st April 1959 to 31st August 1959 is placed on the table of the House.

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[a] Printed as Appendix III on pages 207-208 infra.